NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1477 SEPTEMBER 21, 1976
FRED GALVAN

SEA LAW CONFERENCE ENDS

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN EXAMINES THE OUTCOME OF THE JUST-CONCLUDED LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK.

VOICE: SPORTS FANS DISAPPOINTED WHEN THEIR TEAM LOSES THE ANNUAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP OFTEN CONSOLE THEMSELVES WITH THE WISTFUL SLOGAN: "WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR." AS THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA ENDED IN NEW YORK FRIDAY THAT SLOGAN COULD HAVE WELL APPLIED--WITH ALMOST EQUAL WISTFULNESS. FOR SEVEN WEEKS OF INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS LEFT THE MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FIFTY DELEGATIONS JUST A LITTLE AHEAD OF WHERE THEY WERE WHEN THEY CONVENED. BUT THAT IN ITSELF IS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. BECAUSE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE ADJOURNMENT, THE CONFERENCE SEEMED TO BE DRIFTING TOWARD THE SHOALS OF A STALEMATE THAT COULD HAVE WRECKED THE WHOLE PROJECT. INSTEAD, THE CONFERENCE DREW BACK FROM THOSE DANGEROUS WATERS AND DECIDED TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS NEXT YEAR--IN MAY.

WHAT BROUGHT THE MEETING SO CLOSE TO FOUNDERING WAS A KEY ISSUE. STATED SIMPLY IT IS THIS: "WHO SHALL HAVE ACCESS TO THE RICH MINERAL RESOURCES OF THE OCEAN FLOOR--ITS DEPOSITS OF MANGANESE, COPPER AND NICKEL?"

THE WORLD'S DEVELOPING NATIONS, SOME OF WHICH INCLUDE THE LAND-LOCKED AND GEOGRAPHICALLY-DISADVANTAGED COUNTRIES, WANT AN INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITY TO HAVE EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OVER EXPLOITATION OF THOSE RESOURCES. THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS REJECT THIS AS IMPRACTICAL -- THEY PREFER A MIXED SYSTEM WHICH WOULD PERMIT PRIVATE COMPANIES TO MINE SOME OF THE OCEAN FLOOR'S MINERALS UNDER THE REGULATION AND CONTROL OF SUCH AN AUTHORITY. THE UNITED STATES HAS OFFERED TO HELP FINANCE SUCH A PROJECT

AND HAS WARNED THAT ANY OTHER FORMULA LEADS ONLY TO A STALEMATE. AND SUCH A STALEMATE, WASHINGTON HAS CAUTIONED, CAN ONLY RESULT IN UNREGULATED SEA-BED MINING BY PRIVATE FIRMS WITH THE BACKING OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS.

SECRETARY KISSINGER, IN A STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE END OF THE NEW YORK MEETING, RECOGNIZED THIS DANGER WHEN HE NOTED THAT--IN HIS WORDS--"SOME DELEGATIONS CHOSE TACTICS OF CONFRONTATION. SUCH TACTICS," HE SAID, "CANNOT WORK AND WILL INEVITABLY LEAD TO DEADLOCK AND UNILATERAL ACTION." BUT HE ALSO NOTED THAT OTHER DELEGATIONS HAD REACTED CONSTRUCTIVELY TO THE UNITED STATES AND INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD PROPOSALS. IN THIS SAME SPIRIT, HE SAID, THE UNITED STATES WOULD FOLLOW UP ITS INITIATIVE BOTH DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN SESSIONS AND AT NEXT YEAR'S SESSION.

IN ANY CASE, IT IS THIS ISSUE--OF DEEP SEA-BED RESOURCES--WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED. COMMENTING ON IT AND OTHER ITEMS ON WHICH THE DEVELOPING AND INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS WERE DIVIDED, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE, SRI LANKA'S H. SHIRLEY AMERASINGHE SUMMED IT ALL UP WHEN HE SAID: "EVERYONE WAS AS FLEXIBLE AS STEEL AND AS RIGID AS RUBBER."

IN ANY CASE, THE WORLD NOW HAS TO WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR--AND HOPES FOR MORE POSITIVE RESULTS THEN.

-0-